III

THE FRANCE OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

THE France of to-day and to-morrow. . . . Is there much meaning in that opposition? Hardly any. The France of to-day is an abstraction; or rather, to-day is an abstraction to France.

The thrilling present is an hour of almost intolerable suspense. Only through an exaltation of spirit can France bear the still open wound, the gnawing grief for her sons and children who died. She allows herself to be carried onward, on the tide of hard-won triumph, to the hope, the vision of the years that are to be. The France of to-day is all in the meditation, in the preparation of to-morrow.

Reconstruction, indeed—the word, with us, is only too literally true; and the extent of the destruction suffered adds a poignant sense to its hopeful sound.

From the burnt homes, the ravaged fields, the annihilated industries, to the very frame and order of her whole life, economic, politic, social, moral, France faces the magnitude of her task, and feels herself equal to it. There remains to her, with the generous help of her friends, the most precious assurance of recovery and survival: the will of a generation—of those who come back, and of those who died. The spirit of the dead shall inspire the men who live after them.

A united will—an intimation—more than a hope, a certainty—such is the burden of these beautiful anxious days. Let us picture France as she sees herself in the glow of her faith and her resolve. It is an ideal; but of the kind which

possesses enough force and magnetism to make the total failure of its endeavor a moral impossibility.

Trying to analyze the spirit and the aims of reconstruction in France, let us not, for once, follow the deductive French method which goes from principles to applications. Some of the applications are so urgent that they take precedence, by right as in fact, over all things. The implied principles, the rejuvenated mind and soul of a people, will reveal themselves gradually as we proceed.

Looming largest, and most pressing, among the problems to be solved, is the question of the race. France understands that the continuity of her very life is at stake. Her population before the war was not increasing; it was even, in some parts, slightly decreasing. The dreadful losses of the last four years have brought home the seriousness of the peril to all responsible men and women. The official figures of our killed and crippled may have come as a shock upon many of our friends. Statesmen, politicians, and the collective instinct of citizens are at one in a deep conviction that this task should be taken up first of all. Before rebuilding the national organization, the nation itself is to be rebuilt.

Why was our population relatively declining? Moral causes had most to do with it. The Anglo-Saxon world has outlived the mistaken assumption that France had no family life. The family, with us, is the corner-stone of the social structure; but its very intimacy, and the warmth of its atmosphere, somewhat narrow its outlook, restrict its power of expansion. French parents had few children because it did not suit their over-anxious affection to spread over many. Again, they somewhat lacked the buoyancy, the economic optimism, which lightly accept the risks each new human being is to face in the world. . . . Whatever the case may

be, a universal reaction has set in. The nation prepares to take in hand the insurance of its future. Efficient radical measures are contemplated at last; and the tone of public opinion makes it probable that they will not fall short of their object. The State will definitely step in. Not only will there be abatements of impositions and taxes in all forms; not only will scholarships and studentships in unlimited number open the avenues of knowledge to all children: a more direct participation of the community in bearing the burden of large families, through grants in aid or otherwise, will lift the question bodily from an individual on to a social plane.

To secure the race from its unconscious suicide will not be enough, if destructive agents are allowed to prey upon it. The scourge of war makes it more than ever necessary to fight other scourges. The problem of alcoholism will have to be tackled in good earnest. France is not, in that respect, quite so bad as she is sometimes supposed to be; wine, her national beverage, allows of innocuous, when moderate, consumption. The wine-growing industry is not only essential to the prosperity of France; the liquor itself is hallowed with too many associations, is too narrowly connected with the geniality of traditional French manners, to be ever put under a legal ban. But if the uncompromising teetotaler has hardly any future in France, public opinion is more and more giving its support to a vigorous crusade against intoxicating drinks. Already the sale of absinthe has been prohibited, without compensation to the producers; the old allowance granted the French peasant for the home distilling of his brandy, has been cancelled. Emergency measures of military discipline, taken during the war, have prepared the way for a more active intervention of the legislator. Inseparably bound up as the question is with

financial and political interests, it does not seem unduly optimistic to hope that the rising wave of social courage will surmount those obstacles. France realizes that she must cure the worst evils of alcoholism or give up the fruits of victory.

Tuberculosis threatens the race with another and even more insidious danger. The strain, the fatigues, the underfeeding of the war have increased its alarming progress. Much good work has been done, while the struggle against the foe engrossed the attention, the strength of France, by the generous help of American doctors and nurses. Their efforts will not have been lavished in vain. The task they have begun or continued is of national importance; freed from the invaders, the nation itself intends to take it in hand. The methods are known and tried; the plans and schemes are drawn up; decisive success should be the reward of energy and civic conscience. It is a sign of the times that hardly any clear-sighted citizen expects energy and civic conscience to be lacking.

Had the physical fibre of the French race deteriorated? Glib assertions had been heard to that effect. The war may have been a surprise to some of our friends, as to most of our enemies. The peasant, the workman, the student of France have indicated their toughness of muscle and of nerve. Unknown to most observers, during the last quarter of a century, the influence of sports and games had been silently making itself felt. The French youth had rediscovered their old-time enthusiasm for bodily exercise; and no more promising symptom has yet appeared of the new spirit which indeed stirs in the nation. The achievement of yesterday is an incentive to greater attempts. The health of the people is growing to be one of the chief objects of education and government. The havoc of the war

gives a supreme claim to the development of national hygiene. Four years in the trenches will make camping out a taste and a luxury. The struggle hardly over, football, cycling, rowing, walking find more votaries than before. Military training, reduced to its essentials, is availing itself of the improved system of drill which the supple French genius has stamped with its own mark. The race of to-morrow bids fair to rise in robustness and self-command above that of yesterday.

At every step in the rebuilding of the people, political considerations intervene. Bent on shaping her own destiny, France finds her motive power in the energy of the nation. Will the government, the administration, be a fitting instrument to her? A reconstruction of French politics is at hand. The war has laid unforgetable emphasis on the fact and the idea of national solidarity. When the party truce is over—and it will very soon be a thing of the past—its lingering influence will still be felt. The lesson of interdependence has sunk deep into the hearts of all. A more substantial democracy will embody the obligation each citizen acknowledges to his fellows. The way to reorganization lies through electoral reform. Whatever the precise method adopted, the appeal to the people will be broader as well as fairer. Proportional representation might come into its own before long. The granting of the vote to women was but yesterday, in France, a matter of academic interest; it is now a certainty of the near future. French parties are, of course, in the crucible. In what shapes they will crystallize anew, it is not yet possible to tell. But should even the old names and lines of cleavage be preserved, it would none the less be true that the before-the-war formulæ are played out. Economic and social problems are more and more coming to the front; their advent gives a new

seriousness, a reality, a vital significance, to the old game of politics. It is probable that the deep-lying tendencies to progress on radical lines, and to conservation pure and simple, will beget more direct and genuine expressions of themselves. The wide-spread stirring of the political conscience promises to result in a quickening of the sense of public duty, in a more effective working of the democratic scheme, and in improved electoral manners.

Meanwhile public opinion is rallying round a demand for more efficient methods of administration. Routine and red tape had always been denounced, and, to a large extent, always denounced in vain. There seems to have risen in France one of those deep irresistible swells of the democratic will which now and again sweep away the most strongly rooted abuses. Here the lessons of the war inseparably blend themselves with the example of America. The necessity, the possibility, and the advantage of quick, simple action have been a hundred times illustrated in the last struggle; they have forcibly taken hold of the common mind. All the servants of the public, from the statesman to the pettiest functionary, will have to adapt themselves to the new spirit; and an encouraging sign is that some steps have already been taken in the right direction. Unless our administration is modernized and relatively simplified, unless the net output of each working unit in the machine is substantially increased, the dissatisfaction with it which prevails in almost every circle will bring about sweeping changes and root-and-branch reforms.

One of the most significant expressions of that protest is the reaction against the excesses of centralization in all fields; and again, the most important aspect of this reaction is the "regionalist" movement. A new life is awaking everywhere in the old provinces, with their distinctive traits,

their original manners, their traditions; and that sentimental revival fits in with the tendency to economic initiative and expansion. The "regions" will roughly coincide with the ancient historical divisions of the soil of France; they will be more strictly determined by the natural lines of attraction and organization which industry and commerce, along with geographical factors, have laid down. Without threatening the strong unity of the French nation, they will enrich it with a fuller wealth of variety. It seems hardly probable that the uniform districts or "departments" which the Revolution had substituted for the provinces will cease to be administrative areas of some kind; but their distribution into groups will be both an effect and a symptom of a bolder and more realistic notion of the working of a modern state. Here, again, the dreams and the schemes have outgrown the platonic stage. It is not easy to exaggerate the import of such facts as the reviving of the "foire de Lyon," successfully accomplished in war time.

However keen the attraction given to political and administrative reforms, it is the problems of economic and social life which are more than all others coming to the front. There, every one feels, is the centre of the vast readjustment through which France is to open for herself a new path in a new era. As in other fields, the rude, imperious, upsetting experiences of the war leave behind them a healthy sense of the complexity of things. Where each doctor used to have a nostrum, and only one, we see men more and more coming round to the notion of complementary correctives to contradictory evils. A dim perception has awakened in the masses, that France was at one and the same time over-centralized and over-individualistic. Whatever may have been the encroachments of the State, the vices of public officials, they were brought about, or at least encouraged,

by a passive, an indifferent, a routine-loving tone of economic and civic life. This deficiency, first of all, will have to be remedied; and every citizen is taking up his own share of a reform which concerns every one. The slogan of the coming time is production; and the way to increased production lies through effort, self-help, initiative. No captain of industry, in France, but knows that our industrial methods must be modernized and renovated; no merchant but realizes that markets are ever to be won anew, or they are lost. The lesson of American enterprise is everywhere quoted and digested.

Will French business be properly "Americanized"? Some there are who seem to wish for that consummation. The gospel of brisk alertness, up-to-date efficiency, now and again is pushed to the extreme of a preaching of the "Taylor system." It is hardly probable, and it may not be desirable, that the processes of production should be so strictly analyzed, so severely gauged, and subjected to such thorough scientific discipline. The problem of output, in France, is not so much a question of quantity as of quality. Every operative, with us, is more or less a skilled workman. If it be true, as our friends are pleased to say, that some artistic gift is the birthright of each French artisan, the matter and the manner of our national industries ought to answer to that essential element of success. A relative relaxation of enforced rules may be compatible with, and indeed indispensable to, a higher level of individual attainment. This reservation leaves ample room for the improvement of machinery and methods. Our harbors and railroads, our docks and warehouses, our works and plants, will testify in a few years to the fact that the war was a great eye-opener, and that the Mecca of modern business is somewhere between New York and Chicago. Immediately after the

armistice, one of our leading firms of munition-makers is setting up the wholesale production of standardized cheap motor-cars; every American, and every Frenchman for that matter, can tell where it has got the idea from.

On the other hand, the more thoughtful and public-spirited class of people no longer rely with the same confidence on the old-time gospel of unmitigated individualism. The war has been a lesson, on a gigantic scale, about the necessity of economic organization. State control, with all its faults and inconveniences, has in more than one field saved the situation. Its inconveniences, no less than its faults, are prompting an almost universal demand for a return to the normal condition of trade. Restrictions and regulations are vanishing one by one; and if the more impatient spirits could carry the day, those relics of the war would all go at once, leaving behind them only unpleasant memories. But the impatient spirits do not find it as easy as before to stampede public opinion into inconsiderate moods. The consumers, as a class, and indeed as the majority of the nation, have begun to feel their feet; they will remember that against the crushing cost of life, there was no salvation but coöperation and state help. The coöperative principle is at last coming into its own; and its range is extending to all parts of economic life. The producers themselves are awaking to its claim. The business superiority of wholesale production and combined enterprise is an accepted fact. While the state-controlled "consortiums" are still eagerly denounced, private trusts and "cartels" are forming everywhere. Jurists and economists agree as to the advisability of cancelling the old French statute which indiscriminately prohibits all industrial coalitions. It is hardly necessary to add that the open or secret pooling of concerns calls for watchful attention on the

part of the legislator and the public; henceforth the more advanced stage of social consciousness in France precludes the possibility of unchecked exploitation of the people.

As for the action of the State, it will, when all is said, have received during the war a substantial and permanent increase. An ampler part of the nation's common interests is to be taken in hand by the nation itself. If the indispensable instruments—the departments and services—have proved in many respects inadequate to such a task, the inference is, not that the task is hopeless, but that the instruments must be improved. In this way administrative reform and economic reform go together. Three months after the armistice, our railway companies are given back much of their former independence; but they will not use it in the same way. . . . The State will stimulate where it does not directly intervene; and our shipping, our canals, our harbors, will be managed more and more as national assets in the world struggle. That almost untapped source of power and wealth, our waterfalls, will be turned to better use under the supervision of the State. Private enterprise will not be excluded from such a promising field; but its freedom will be limited, as its initiative proved slow and timid. Capitalism, indeed, will enter into all sorts of new combinations with the organs and the needs of the community at large.

The financial problem calls for the most energetic as well as the most cautious policy; it calls for public-spirited action on the part of capitalists. Will they rise to the emergency? It was a traditional trait of France that the rights of the individual were more jealously asserted and maintained in money matters than in almost any other domain. The immense sacrifices of the war have deeply shaken that old stubbornness of a thrifty people; the gold of the country

has not been withheld when its blood was freely flowing. From the awful trial the nation emerges with a chastened heart. Many symptoms point to a much easier, a much more universal acceptation of all civic obligations, financial duties included. The prospect, but for that change of feeling, would be gloomy enough. Whatever reparations may be obtained from Germany, they will never prove equal to the losses of the war. Whatever help France may still receive from her allies, she will have to bear much of the burden of her own material salvation. Her recovery will depend on the fortitude her people show, and on the elasticity of her productive skill. From the moral heights where he had risen in the great struggle, the citizen will not drop into the slough of individualistic selfishness. Heavier taxes, when demanded, will be paid. The income tax will play no less a part in French budgets than it does in those of Anglo-Saxon countries. A levy on capital has been announced, and hardly any voice so far rises in protest. The only real alleviation to the crushing weight of the national debt is an increase, quantitative or qualitative, in the average output of each worker; and Frenchmen mean that stimulated efficiency should be a character of the new France.

What of the social problem? It looms, of course, very large in France. Everybody agrees, more or less, that the relations between the classes have to be readjusted. The formula and the method of the change are still far from settled by common consent; and that is why all clear-sighted citizens feel there is some ground for anxiety in the prospect. The spirit, at least, of a sane, resolute adaptation to a transformed world has been clearly enough disengaged from the conflicting tendencies of the time, and men of good will are rallying round that centre of healing endeavor. The national idea affords a key to the solution of the prob-

lem. The fact of solidarity, the notion of independence, open a way to bold reforms and set a limit to possible disorganization. The workers are bent on claiming a higher standard of life; and many employers no longer object to giving their human material a privileged share of their attention and sacrifices. Will the demands of the former, and the concessions of the latter, keep within the bounds of reasonableness? A hopeful symptom, amid some disquieting appearances, is that the question is set in its proper light. The war has emphasized the nexus between all functions and conditions in the State. It is realized that the management of the national concern is a coöperative piece of work, and that reforms are to be judged from their relation to it. It is not to be expected that a fairer distribution of the product, with no detrimental influence on the prosperity of the whole, will be effected at once; but a substantial and increasing body of citizens are honestly trying to thresh out an improved compromise, as a temporary stage on the road of progress. It is possible to believe that the Bolshevist revolution will not sweep through France. The wave of victory will tide her over the dangerous transition from war to peace. A concentrated discipline of hearts and minds will not dissolve into anarchy at the hour of relaxation. But the peril of social disruption will only be easily averted if the rulers of the people are no less courageous than they are wise. Syndicalism is one of the forces of the present, one of the elements of the future; the workers' organizations are bound to assume a larger share of responsibility in the direction of industry; the integration of such a change in the old social order will hardly be possible unless the order is made elastic, and a peaceful understanding encouraged between the classes. The action of trade unions must be reconciled with the control and guidance of the

State in the interest of the whole. Through that impending evolution, the economic originality of France will stand her in good stead. Her peasants, who even now form the staple of her people, are a slow-moving and a level-headed race; they will instinctively return to the grooves of their traditional life; demobilization will replace them in a frame of society to which they obstinately adhere. The difficulty will be, rather, to stimulate them to more modern methods of agriculture; to make them take heartily to coöperation and to tractors. . . .

Lastly, we reach the moral domain, to which everything converges, and whence, in fact, all lines of development radiate. The France of to-morrow lies preformed in the consciousness of herself which prompts the France of to-day to faith and hope, to restlessness, to dreams of progress and plans of earnest action.

An eager, resolute spirit of reform, no less than sad, proud joy in the hard-won fight, gives its distinctive tone to the mood of the present. In the flush of victory, self-satisfaction is not the predominant feeling of France. Her condition is like that of a patient who has just recovered from a prolonged severe illness; she has reaped from her fearful experience that quicker, more vivid, more complete self-realization which is the harvest of suffering. Her strong and her weak parts, the sore points in her organism, have been brought out by the searching trial of war. Confidence in the future is tempered, is chastened by the knowledge of her deficiencies, as by unutterable grief. France understands and faces the necessity of a readaptation to the new world.

Old men speak of it in the abstract; they think of it with a pang, a secret misgiving. But the young have an intimate, a living perception of the fresher purpose; the soul of the coming age is in the minds of youth. The citizens who

stayed at home, thought and worked, waited and longed, are presiding over the transition to peace; but the France of to-morrow will be built by those who fought. There is a new ring in the voices of the surviving heroes of the war; there is a more direct, a keener look in their eyes. Their tastes, their ambitions, are not those of their elders. They mean to lead active, strenuous lives. The careers they plan out for themselves imply exertions, risk, adventure. They want to do, to struggle, and to win through to social success. Politics, administrative functions, the professions, no longer have the same appeal to them; they wish to go into business, to start or revive an industry, a trade; they dream of travelling, and seeing the world for themselves. Many of them have set their hearts on America, as the land of efficiency and up-to-date material organization; they will settle there for a time, and learn. They have not lost the fine, ideal sense of disinterested values; but they know that the wealth of France is to be restored; they aim at playing their parts in the reconstruction of a prosperous people; and their sobered, realistic view of things does not rest satisfied with less than the full, material and moral independence of a producer, a creator of useful things, of energy, of order.

The moral features of the coming men and women will be moulded by the education they receive. A thorough reform of universities and schools is demanded by an increasing body of opinion, as a preliminary condition to the full growth of a new France. Some there are who oppose any serious change on principle, because, they say, the existing system has justified itself in the war. But the soldiers themselves know better; the most zealous advocates of drastic measures are those who passed from the colleges to the trenches. Like almost everything else, the methods and programmes of teaching will have to be readjusted. Peda-

gogic discussion is rife, and in no field is agreement more difficult or progress fenced in by so many obstacles. But from the conflicting theories some lines of probable development stand clear. Elementary education must be universal in fact, not in name; it must be more efficient. Equality of opportunities is to be given all children, and access to higher learning refused to no proficient one. Universities are to strike root in the district to which they belong; a wise adaptation to local traditions, habits, interests, should act as a corrective to the paramount influence of centralized authority. The corporate life which of late has been awaking among teachers and students must be encouraged, as it trains the citizen for the working of democracy. Character, personality, self-reliance, discipline, are to be placed among educational ideals quite as high as intelligence and scholarship. The outcome of these views is a modified conception of the humanities. The pursuit of useful knowledge, while receiving more attention, is not to encroach on the disinterested culture of the mind; but culture can find its proper materials in the apprenticeship of the world and of man; "modern humanist" studies can be based on the vernacular, on the literature of the fatherland, and all the rich, varied, suggestive picture of the universe.

The war is credited with a revival of religious fervor in all the countries which underwent the great ordeal. It was not in vain that during four years each individual human being, in France, was brought face to face with the final realities of life and death. A more universal respect for religious values is an element of the new moral atmosphere. But if a deeper toleration, a genuine sympathy with all sincere beliefs, have put to shame and extinguished the spirit of the old wrangling, that change of heart does not seem to bring about the triumph of any single creed. Aspiration

and desire have not crystallized yet in any definite form; and the faiths of men are as various as the promptings of human nature. The tendency which obtains cannot be described as orthodoxy, but pragmatism.

Pragmatism, indeed, denotes the view of life which gives the present time its most marked philosophical originality. A rather dogmatic rationalism had long been considered as the dominant characteristic of French thought. It has given way under the combined assault of human experience, psychological study, and theoretical criticism. The restlessness of the nineteenth century, the disasters of the first Franco-German war, the broadening of scientific horizons, and an internal growth of the mind, had already shaken the somewhat narrow edifice built up on an exclusively positive conception of truth. The lessons of the last four years have brought to a head moral tendencies which had been silently or openly ripening. The clear, logical mind of France has grasped and accepted the essential many-sidedness of truth. In a wide margin of problems of conduct and belief, the option of various working formulæ has replaced the sharp stern dilemmas of imperious reason. The reaction against intellectualist assumptions even overreaches itself; and it is a fashion, among the young, to denounce and renounce not only some of the methods, but the total aim and endeavor of four centuries of French thought.

But the exacting use of the mind as an instrument in the discovery of truth keeps with us its exclusive appeal as a privileged human exertion. The deepest current of our mental energies still flows in the old channels. A rationalist attitude, made supple, broad, tolerant, and compatible with the freedom of faith, answers best to the needs and satisfies the cravings of most Frenchmen. Intellectualism of some kind is indeed the pragmatism of the French.

The fresher, keener look in the eyes of the young, their worship of will, their resolve to attempt and to do, betoken a new phase in the moral rhythm whose unbroken flow leaves the essential personality of France unchanged. The present is all for eagerness, imagination, action, ardor; and who should wonder when, from a half-ruined world and the valley of the shadow of death, a generation emerges to life and light, and the stirring hope of a better era? But the France of to-morrow will be France still. The intellectual fire—the dauntless quest for truth—the focus of her most cherished idealism, will be still burning in the inmost shrine of her spiritual temple.

L. CAZAMIAN.